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ABSTRACT

The Johnson County Community College has decentralized counseling services in which counselors are located in the office areas of the various divisions rather than in a separate counseling office. Counselors are recruited with backgrounds in the specific program areas for which they will be responsible. The counseling program emphasizes referral to other community agencies rather than duplicating community services at the college. The key ingredient in the program is an online system in which the counselor has full-time access to a computer where all the demographic, transcript, course and program information is stored. During a conference, the student and counselor can enter the courses chosen into the computer system. At the end of the interview, the counselor touches the "send" button and the courses chosen are stored by the computer. During registration, the computer makes checks for time conflicts, pre- or co-requisites, and class capacity. Grade reports are also done by computer. This system is particularly useful in a multi-campus college. (KM)

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YES, WE HAVE COMPUTER ASSISTED COUNSELING

JC 740 090

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YES, WE HAVE COMPUTER ASSISTED COUNSELING

Three years ago, the new Johnson County Community College located in the metropolitan Kansas City area, was faced with the decision of whether to approach counseling and guidance in the traditional manner of centralizing the function in an obscure part of the campus then waiting patiently for a few students to discover its existence for personal counseling, or to approach the counseling and guidance program at the College in a much broader vein by making it the focal point of the student's activity on campus.

After much deliberation, it was decided to use a comprehensive approach in which the counselor would be given the responsibility of assisting all students in career planning and selecting an academic program of studies (academic advising) in addition to helping students solve their problems of a personal or social nature.

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the counseling staff, it was decided to decentralize this function by locating the counselors in the office areas of the various divisions at the College. This permits the counselor to be better informed about the courses and programs offered by that division. It also provides an opportunity for better interaction between counselor and instructor as they work toward meeting the needs of the student.

In addition to decentralizing the counseling function, counselors were recruited with backgrounds in the areas of subject and vocational-technical program areas with responsibilities for the various divisions, giving them a background of the divisional responsibilities and share common interests with the teaching staff in order to provide a better academic advising program.

Because the College has a COMMUNITY ORIENTED philosophy, the counseling and guidance program emphasizes referral to other community agencies who are financed, and staffed for, specific purposes instead of trying to duplicate those services at the College.

A decentralized counseling program coupled with the traditional method of record keeping and distribution could be disasterous because of the high cost of duplicating and storing the many essential records required for each counselor for every college student. The traditional approach would also require a large staff of support personnel whose sole responsibility would be to keep records updated and accessable. Meanwhile, the time lag between a planned course of action and carrying it out, updating records and distributing them would keep a decentralized counseling program constantly two to three weeks behind at all times.

The key ingredient to a well planned, decentralized counseling and guidance program is to accept the latest technological advances in data processing with an online system in which the counselor has full time access to a Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) connected to a computer where all of the demographic, transcript, current courses and program information is stored and ready for instant retrieval.

Today, the Johnson County Community College leases from a private vendor the programming and computer hardware to put the entire student data base at the finger tips of the counseling staff.

The system is initiated when the College receives an application from a prospective student. The Admissions Office CRT operator uses the keyboard to send a code to the computer which returns to the CRT screen a formatted display that resembles the application blank. The CRT

operator fills in the formatted screen using the attached typewriter keyboard. After the information is recorded on the screen the operator touches the send button on the keyboard to transmit the data on the screen to the computer. It will take from 3 to 5 seconds to transmit the data to the computer, put the data in storage on magnetic disc at the computer center and then resend the data back to the CRT screen for verification by the sender, and the student. During the 3 to 5 second interval, the computer will make various checks to determine if the data sent is correct. Example: A field on the screen display is designated to record the sex of the student. Any entry in that field other than a F or M will be rejected and an error message will appear on the screen when the computer resends the information for verification by the operator. This permits the operator to correct the error immediately.

The student may also be entered into the system at computer speed. The ACT main office in Iowa records, on tape, the demographic and ACT test results of high school students who have taken the ACT test. Consequently, colleges who were listed by the students as first, second, or third choice may secure the tape from ACT, and may use this tape as input to the system. The CRT operator will merely verify the data with the application and change only those data elements that are not correct, saving a considerable amount of input time.

As soon as the data is received and stored by the computer, any counselor on campus has 3 to 5 seconds access to that information by inputting the student number (social security number) and a formatted display code.

Just prior to a scheduled conference on career planning or academic advising, the counselor can review the demographic information on the student by coding the student number and a formatted display code.

During the counselor conference the student and counselor will explore the student's aspirations, goals, talents, and achievements and begin transposing them into a course of study at the college (program plan). During the conference the counselor codes the course number on the CRT screen he and the student have agreed on (instead of writing them on a form). At the end of the interview the counselor touches the send button and the student's program plan is stored by the computer. This can be retrieved at any other CRT station on campus where there is authority to do so.

The student can then go to a designated registration area or areas, determine his schedule of classes, and give them to a CRT operator. The operator will input the course and section number and send this information to the computer. The computer will make time conflict checks, check for pre or co-requisites, check the requested courses against the program, check class capacity, and return its finding to the CRT operator. If no conflicts exist for a class section, the student is encumbered in that class and a space will be held until he is satisfactorily scheduled in the remaining courses he desires. If a course requested is not on the program plan, it will not be scheduled, but it will be noted on the CRT screen and the CRT operator will advise the student that he should review his objectives and re-evaluate his program plan with his counselor.

The system can be programmed so that as soon as a satisfactory schedule of courses is completed, a code is placed on the screen with the scheduled classes and sent to the computer which automatically sends the information to a printer located in the business office. There multiple copies are printed of the tuition and fees to be charged the student and this then becomes the student receipt or a billing document.

The procedure just mentioned could be modified by permitting counselors to register students in class during their conference.

During the add-drop period, the counselor, instead of filling out forms, completes the required changes on the CRT screen and all records on class lists are automatically updated. In addition, the refund computations are automatically printed in the business office, ready for mailing refunds or billing.

The grade report received by the student at the end of each semester will list the entire program plan; the courses transferred in from other institutions relative to the plan, the courses and grades completed at the College, those courses remaining on the plan to be taken, semester and cumulative credit hours, and GPA's. This will continually keep the student informed of his past success and his future plans, and if he wishes to change his goals he may do so by seeing his counselor. This data processing system also does a continual degree check which eliminates many hours in the registrar's office each semester used in checking to see if the student has, or is, meeting graduation requirements.

Because most states are providing additional monies for vocational programs it is very easy to compute exact costs of programs and provide for state offices' courses taken for the various programs by students.

The system just described is particularly adept for a multi-campus college because of the ease at which a student can go from one campus to another without having his records moved. For instance, a student could enroll for, say, three different classes on three different campuses from one location. Yet security for changing or recalling certain records can be established by campus and CRT. For

example, course grades may be set up so that they can only be entered or changed in the registrar's office on a particular campus.

To demonstrate the flexibility of this system a counselor could actually take a portable CRT to a high school, set up a table next to a telephone, dial the computer telephone number, put the telephone hand set into the appropriate openings, admit the student to the college by filling out the appropriate admissions display and register him in classes. Total entry time for the entire operation would be less than five minutes.

At present, the student personnel system is coupled with a report generating system that provides reports from the data base by inputting the report parameters on a format displayed on the CRT screen.

Suppose you would like to know the names and telephone numbers of all veterans over twenty-four years of age who are enrolled in the allied health programs. Instead of a programmer working for three to five weeks to write the program, you would fill out the format displayed on the CRT screen which will determine the way you want the printed report to look. Then fill out the second format with the data element parameters. These two formats are then sent to the computer and the report is printed out and returned to you shortly. With minimal training, a typical report will take from five to seven minutes to prepare.

Advantages of an online data processing information system

1. Counselors have access to information at their fingertips without any concern for locating and misplacing paper records.

2. Incorrect data in the system can be changed immediately instead of a one or two week time lag.

3. Information on a student is available for all counselors. No concern has to be given to transferring bulky folder records.

4. Counselors have access to the data base that can be managed in a way never before available to them.

5. Academic advising by professional counselors will benefit students because the **uninterested** staff member or the staff member **selling** his courses will not interfere with the student making an objective decision about his future.

6. Many side benefits are available to the instructional branch such as concise information for planning courses and section needs, and timely information regarding class capacity.

7. Programming for this type of information system is now available and colleges do not have to re-invent the wheel. Nor do they need to provide a large outlay of cash for development.

8. Minimal amount of time is required to train operators.

9. The system is user-oriented instead of data processing oriented.

10. Greatly reduces file space.

11. Provides maximum record security.

12. Reduces input errors because there is less data handling.

13. Permits instant access to records at remote stations on campus.

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CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION